

HARTFORD STREET ZEN CENTER

57 Hartford Street San Francisco, California 94114 Telephone: (415) 863-2507

Newsletter

January/February/March 1990

The hermitage at
Issan-ji embraces the
myriad things.
Its heart, a deep
pool, reflects the moon.

One Mountain ascends
One Mountain.
One Mountain settles in
One Mountain.
Auspicious Day,
Great Joy.

—A Student

The Mountain Seat Ceremony

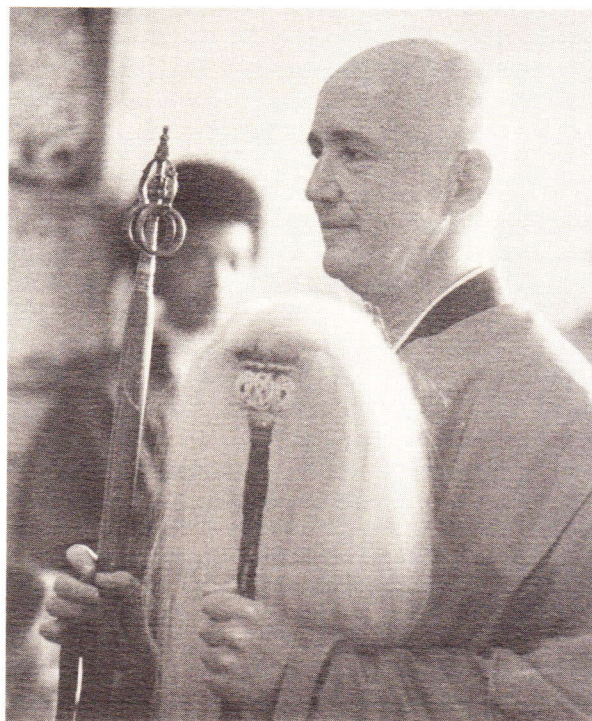
Issan said, "This incense is offered for the Buddha of no marks, the Buddha who is all things, for Shakyamuni Buddha, for all the Buddhas who do not know they are Buddha, for the protectors of Buddhism, for the patriarchs, who with unceasing effort crossed the ocean of one point bringing us this immense dharma, and especially for our first teacher in America, Shogaku Shunryu Daiocho. For this fruit of many colors all the world pays homage."

The Prajna Paramita Hridaya Sutra was chanted, ending with the Great Transcendent Mantra: "Gate Gate Paragate Parasamgate Bodhi Svaha."

Issan's teacher, Zentatsu Richard Baker-roshi, gave him a new robe which he put on before ascending the Mountain Seat—thus confirming him as Abbot.

Issan said, "This Mountain Seat, climbed many times before, is the everywhere holy mandala. With the help of Baker-roshi and everyone here, in the ten directions and the three times, I will climb this Mountain Seat."

Several statements of support were offered before Issan took the Mountain Seat. Jerry Berg, representing the gay community said, "I recall meeting you, Issan, several years ago when Jim Graves introduced us at the conclusion of Gay Games I. It became clear to me at that first meeting that your intentions were to establish a Buddhist practice engaged in unity,



and I thought that was wonderful, and my mind immediately went into overtime with lots of doubts that it would ever happen. It has happened and it's something that makes us all feel very happy. In fact in honor of today, I might say it makes us all feel very gay. It seems so appropriate and connected, that this center is also a hospice because that is what is going on in our community now. And I want to thank you, Issan, for sharing with the gay community your heart, your practice, and who you are. We are all so enriched by it."

Rick Levine, representing the medical community said, "I'd like to convey to you, Issan, the affection and the support of the community of people working with AIDS in this area, and more particularly, my own love and deepest wish that you continue for a long time to come."

Shunpo Blanche Hartman, representing the Buddhist community said, "Today, as One Mountain prepares to ascend One Mountain, all the beings in the dharma realm rejoice as this Bodhisattva brings his big wide heart to stand on the mountain top and

shine the light of wisdom and compassion for us all. May your dharma live long and prosper, and may your descendants be many."

Issan said, "As the first chief priest of Issan-ji, One Mountain Temple, I offer this incense from the very no-beginning to the immense compassion and wisdom of Buddhist teaching. To the Mahayana Vairochana Buddha, to Manjushri, Avalokiteshvara, and all the Bodhisattvas, to the great historical Shakyamuni Buddha, to all the Patriarchs through Dogen Zenji and Shogaku Shunryu Daiocho, to my own compassionate teacher Zentatsu Myoyu, may their own immeasurable Bodhi practice benefit and inspire in peace and harmony all beings in every world, life after life, all the distances penetrating everywhere for all beings in the six worlds, especially for our dear abiding friends Michael Merrill and Joe Gutierrez who were founding members of this temple, and for all who have given in every way to make this sangha real, may their passage be free from hindrance."

"Our practice at One Mountain temple is settling in closeness with each other, so we can know completely we have bonds with each other that are more important than birth or death—settled in ultimate closeness. I'd like to recite a poem my teacher and I both like, from the koan, "Where to meet after death."

This is the poem in the koan:

True friendship transcends intimacy or alienation
Between meeting and not meeting—no difference
On the old fully blossomed plum tree,
South branch owns the whole spring
North branch owns the whole spring.

This is Issan's poem:

We have bonds with each other that are
more important than life or death.
The original face has no birth or death
Spring is in the plum flower
Entering a painted picture.

Kijun Steve Allen asked the first mondo question, "Hojo sama, the One Mountain rests in great peace, where do we find this peace when we need it?" After a long pause, Issan responded, "One Mountain rests in great peace..." Kijun replied, "We find it with each other." (note: Issan's Buddhist name is One Mountain Great Peace.)

Zenshin Philip Whalen then asked, "Hojo sama, the One Mountain has two peaks, which is real?" Issan answered, "Neither."

Paul Rosenblum asked, "Hojo sama, this Buddha with no marks that you talked about, what is his mind?" Issan said, "No mind."

Chikudo Jerome Petersen posed the final question, "What is the practice of Issan-ji?" Issan's answer was, "Settling in closeness."

Issan spoke saying, "I am grateful to have been part of establishing this Mountain Seat with you. Each of you. The purpose of our practice is see things as they are, observe things as they are, and let things go as they go."

Baker-roshi said, "Life and death, appearance and mind, one breath tastes awareness. The Dharmakaya throne has been realized. The Dharmakaya throne has been realized. Issan is here. At home at Issan-ji, One Mountain Temple."

Kijun Steve Allen read congratulatory messages: a telegram from Tetsugen Bernard Glassman-sensei of the Zen Community of New York; a telegram from Yvonne Rand, "Dharma clouds, rain. Issan takes the high seat. Congratulations to Issan. And to Zentatsu Myoyu, and the Hartford Street gang—best wishes." ; a card to Tommy Dorsey from Les Kaye, "Tommy, congratulations on your Mountain Seat ceremony. Continue Suzuki-roshi's way forever."; from Connie Packer, "Sorry I cannot attend, but I send my congratulations and best wishes, Issan. Thanks for including me. Love, Connie Packer."; "I will be out of town and unable to attend. My best wishes to Issan on his Installation." Norma Satin; "Dear Issan, congratulations. Still I remember well my last visit at Hartford Street. Sorry that I cannot attend because of the conflict with other schedule. However, I will be with you in my heart." Maezumi-roshi; "The year's last geese flew, resting on the lake. Issan takes the Mountain Seat. We all bow and rejoice. Congratulations, from Dainin Katagiri, and Tomori, and Sangha here in Minnesota."

Leslie James spoke saying, "Issan, dear friend and teacher, from San Francisco Zen Center, I offer you our deepest congratulations and gratitude. You've had such a long and varied path to this mountain, and along the way you've taken the hand of so many of us. And I especially want to thank you for not letting go of our hands once you've taken them."

The bell rang, the procession started, but Issan had one last thing to say, "Uh, just one more thing. (much laughter from the crowd) There's a saying I always like to use, that I first heard from my friend Howard. It's by Meher Baba." "It's a divine art to be cheerful. Do your best. Don't worry. Be happy."

—Niki Rothman

The photographs in this issue of HSZC Newsletter were taken by Barbara Labanski-Wenger.

Issan, the New Abbot

Sangha begins when you know your own suffering and when you can stand still for the suffering of others. This is the basis of Sangha.

Sangha is those who have a vision of the Buddha's Way.

Sangha includes all those to whom you can manifest the Way.

Actually, Sangha is to know that everyone knows the Way, they just need to remember.

Dharma is spontaneously finding joy in the details of life.

Buddha is to receive everyone into your life and to give your life away as if no one is there.

Have a cup of tea with Issan on Issanji Mountain—or in his room on the chair and bed, or on the couch downstairs. Have a cup of tea with each person at One Mountain Temple. Or a cup of coffee.

Issan stands still for each of us. Issan gives everyone a sense of the Way and the Joy of the Dharma. When we forget, Issan reminds us.

My love and gratitude to the New Abbot.

Zentatsu Richard Baker

Only One Mountain Could Hold So Many Sentient Beings

To sit in the dining room of 57 Hartford Street on the day of Shin San Shiki is to absorb the fragrant hospitality of the zen center that is in the midst of the lesbian and gay community.

Superimposed upon the living and dining rooms is the plain leading to the foothills leading to the mountain. The windows glisten with november sun. The spruce branches sway and reveal irregularities in panes of glass that are as old as the house itself. Guests and dignitaries greet each other. There is a sweetness in the air.

At the entrance, David Sunseri says, On behalf of the board of directors of the Hartford Street Zen Center, I invite you to be among us as our first Abbot.

Issan Dai Nei Dorsey replies, As I enter the doors of Issan-ji, One Mountain Temple, I promise that as long as I am here, these doors will be closed to no living being.

The procession visits stations in the zendo and in Maitri House. As Issan enters the dining room, he is accompanied by a butterfly. Issan said many things, of which I remember only four.

At the beginning of his remarks he said, Do not wonder about it at all.

As he descended from the summit, he said, Tight mountain.

At the close, he said, Do your best.

At the preface, he said that he was acting in the name of the Buddha of No Marks and for those who do not know they are the Buddha, among many others.

Everyone then chanted the Great Transcendent Mantra.

Next, Issan was asked, What is the practice of Issan-ji? He answered, Settling in closeness. The ceremony concluded with many heartfelt greetings and expressions of love, encouragement and gratitude.

The following morning, Issan and Zentatsu Myoyu Baker-roshi collaborated on the lecture, Issan's first since January.

These are the words of Baker roshi: One of the most profound philosophical questions is, What is existence? From it flow the second and third generation questions—What is non-existence? What is perfected existence? The Greek commandment, Know yourself, is situated within the context of perfectibility. To look at the question of existence in this way is to ask, What kind of person do we want to inhabit and govern the earth? Jesus was a perfect person. Buddha was a perfect person.

Issan quoted Meher Baba: Cheerfulness is a divine art. Do your best. Don't worry, be happy.

Baker-roshi concluded: The task of the sangha must be both to follow and meet the Abbot. The task of the Abbot must be both to occupy the seat and to show that it can be shared.

—Frederic Fox

What is the most wonderful thing?
Sitting all alone on Mount Issan
With Issan
All at one
With Pai-Chang and Zentatsu
Serving all beings with the
Long chopsticks
Foolishly
Filling the well with snow

—Sojun Mel Weitsman



One Mountain
Climbs
One Mountain
at One Mountain temple:

Bodhisattvas grin and burst
Spontaneously
Into thunderous applause—

A great joy to attend Issan's Mountain Seat ceremony at Hartford Street November 4th. As always, waiting a long time, quietly, and uncomfortably, was a big part of the ceremony, but when Issan and his musical entourage (staff-thump, drum-beat, bell-toll, clackers-crack) reached the front door and Issan said, "The door of the temple is now open wide, and as long as I am here it will stay that way!" in a strong firm voice, everyone forgot about this discomfort; everyone became a believer. In ceremonies like this there is always a balance between the danger of the formality and the depth of the feeling the formality is designed to contain, and most often the formality is in control. But at this ceremony truly the good and positive feelings of love and gratitude were so strong you could sense them all over and beyond the formality. And so when Issan finally sat down on his Mountain Seat, hossu in one hand, staff in the other, radiant, smiling, and fully organized, there was an unscheduled burst of applause. At that moment—if it is not too much to say so—everyone in the universe was gay. Afterward Issan interrupted the procession out to quote Meher Baba, "It's a divine art to be cheerful. Do your best. Don't worry, be happy." I'm sure Baba himself never said it more beautifully nor more convincingly.

—Zoketsu Norman Fischer

Issan-ji

A man sits
on a mountain
reflecting

Man and mountain
are gone

A door opens
forever

—Martha de Barros

Haiku

"Chrysanthemum one,
Nothing is ever always"
Issan-ji welcome.

Dancing Master

Issan taps the Tao
In Castro cosmo-logic
Silver lightening.

—Celeste West

Buddha's work needs the help of many practitioners as direct and open and inclusive as Issan. His virtues now fill Issan-ji.

Because Issan is completely Issan, he demonstrates how each of us can only, finally, be ourselves. And how that unguarded self does unhindered work in the world.

Congratulations to the sangha at Hartford Street, and to Issan, on this auspicious occasion.

May Buddha's teaching go on endlessly.

—Katherine Thanas

"As long as I am here," as Issan said, "this door will remain open to all." These words should be inscribed on the front entrance. All that has been created at Hartford Street, the zendo, the community and now Maitri Hospice, was born from a sense of this inclusiveness. The Mountain Seat Ceremony was a continuation of what Issan and the community at Hartford Street do so well, welcoming all that is offered, the suffering and the joy.

—Frank Ostaseski

Billowing Living Room Curtains/Issan's Mountain Seat Ceremony

The previous day all unexpectedly there we are, Issan and I—though it's not supposed to be until tomorrow we see each other since that's the day of my teacher's ceremony isn't it? "Oooh hi," I coo pleasantly, mutual grooming smiles together crossing paths at the same time, with his obliging "hi" in answer. "Where you off to Issan?" "Ummm doing my banking, I got my list right here, I never know what I'm supposed to do without a list, and then ummm getting back I gotta write this speech for the ceremony tomorrow so maybe Baker-roshi and I'll do it together..."

And when the day comes from all the gearing up that's been happening and all the fuss till everybody's just plain frazzled, and with the as usual way too long wait you have to go through at these official functions, the predictable develops and hysteria starts in, the panic I imagined was gonna set in, does, right on schedule. So why aren't they on time?—fret fret—Where's Issan and where's that Baker-roshi—how come they're not here? With all these people you can't even see what's going on, you can't hear, you can't hardly hear yourself THINK!! And to stave off rapidly mounting agoraphobia I stare at the collar button on the shirt of this cool-looking dude in front of me, which temporarily calms me since it's a nice Ivy League broadcloth type shirt with nice pinstripes and oh-so RESTFUL-MAKING I think as I start becoming a human being again...

...noticing the clanking from the remote parts in the house that's been going on—for how long? And does this mean do you think they've finally got their act together and are going to get this Mountain Seat type thing on the road possibly? Next voice I hear is Issan's on the house's front steps—(judging by snippets of voices wafting in)—waiting for an official go-ahead sign to come on inside officially, is that what he's doing? Yes: Peter Goetz (in board of director's drag—handsome in zen black) issuing Issan the formal invitation—on behalf of blahblah I don't catch). Then a few words of Issan's response, firm, solid, everyday-sounding—"While I'm Abbot the doors to this temple won't close on any living being..." (impressive, mysterious—but I'm crestfallen as a few days later with still active ex-hippie idealism in me asking Issan this question, what's it MEAN what you said at that ceremony huh Issan?—and I get looked at kind of weird as he replies—"Well it doesn't mean we're going to start inviting in STREET PEOPLE").

And then, official retinue in front, Issan's thumping away with this zen staff of his proceeding down the hall, and the line of people goes pro-cessing to the back of the house just off the kitchen, where a wooden platform that's called "the mountain"'s set up already. And just then, as whoever's dinging the

zen dinger goes by in front of me, I get this sort of weird jolt. Naturally this person is NOT Michael Merrill like it is expected to be—but who is it then? And then—isn't MICHAEL supposed to be who it is who carries the zen dinger in these processions? But wait, explain this to me—how can it be, if M's a person who's dead now, that in my mind he's SUPPOSED to be here—SUPPOSED meaning what? I get this onslaught of painful horrible memory vibes—of Michael walking along in processions not long ago, only last year in fact, as if he is still alive. And for a minute or two I'm thrown out of whack, discombobulated...So does this confusion mean I'm in the past or present right now? And then something happens puts a stop to my mounting Michael anxiety, which is...

...Philip, noisily but unintentionally interrupting memory pains, looking somehow like he could use a hand himself for that matter, as he hoists up about-to-be-new-Abbot Issan onto the mountain platform so Issan'll be high up and can look out and give that speech. Then comes another odd development as in pre-speech pronouncements I hear Issan announcing that the person the day's dedicated to is, guess what, Michael Merrill. Which spaces me out completely—and in reaction, I'm so grateful at this dedication I lose all accumulated worry at once as the thought of Michael's eternally handsome fretfully contentious face replaces the others I was having just a minute ago. And now I'm inexplicably happy—like all those yuppies in the movie THE BIG CHILL having a good time at the funeral they're supposed to be having, like you know, hey, let's have a party!?

And it turns out there really IS a party here since, with the churchy part of the ceremonies over and done with, it's time for the reception now where everybody and I go around congratulating Issan and then pressing the flesh with greetings ranging from sort of genuine to totally artificial. Hey, roshi, I say, how's it going? That really was a beautiful piece of brocade rakasu you were wearing for the ceremony I have to tell you, and I bet there's a real story attached as to why, am I right?

Meanwhile continuing to smile and work the room as the occasion demands noticing this big muscly guy (gay cop, turns out) looking quite appealing and in the hopes of a chance to maybe if possible get somewhere with him maybe I start flirting...so that Issan's big day is turning out like every other event that's like this, nothing special, just plain-old plain-old, obligations to fulfill, gossip to catch up on, assignments to try to arrange and all the other junk making up most of anybody's day I guess when just then and strangely something does happen to occur, and it changes everyday feeling so completely that momentarily a totally opposite impression comes about, an expanding awareness that takes my breath away and in the middle of the normal social lies and delusions and commonplaces leaves me, and

everyone else, standing there stock-still having dropped our talk in mid-conversation, eyes staring at the curtains in the front room as they're huge and quiet sweetly and silently just billowing in and at this moment think "...bonds that we have with each other that go beyond life and death" that Issan said earlier at the ceremony as the curtains like Issan's words go drifting in my mind and everybody else's too at the same time—but I don't stop at this exhilarating feeling but go on back to the party (because how can you not) since there'll always be mystical moments in life won't there so I go back and join the rest for more of same.

—Bruce Boone

The Mountain Seat of Issan Dorsey

Parish priest of hip.
Junkie and queen without limits.
Cook and confidant to all.

One...

who worked and served
Bitched and directed
Sewed and protected.

Won.... and wore his name.

No driver. (this guy rides the big bus.)

One... who "little by little:"

Grew gardens—inside and out.

Thrice returner.

Temple for the tempted.

Homebody to the homeless.

Friend to the Mahayana and the long line of budding student saints.

Rounding up his fragmented family.

To celebrate what is rarely seen—

the obvious and the ordinary.

Honoring what has already happened.

and what he has inspired in us from the start.

—Peter van der Sterre

Issan-ji! Issan-ji!
One Mountain
What magic made this name?
Issan-ji is Issan-ji
because it is called Hartford Street

Thus I have heard. A monk named Issan dwelt at Hartford Street. Sitting zazen. Time passed and he kept sitting. More time passed and he became master Issan sitting at Issan-ji

A new dharma legend has begun.
"The tales of Issan-ji", may it have many chapters.

Where did Issan-ji come from?
One Mountain, where is it?
Hartford Street, 57 Hartford Street.
Is 57 Hartford Street Issan-ji?
Is Issan-ji 57 Hartford Street?
Where is it?
Where is Issan?

—Chikudo Jerome Petersen



Jukai

On December 2, the Abbot of Issan-ji, Issan Dorsey, officiated at a traditional Jukai ceremony giving lay ordination and Buddhist precepts to Peter Goetz, Les Harmon, Dana Huntington, Ted Petrella, Niki Rothman, David Sunseri, and Celeste West.

Special Events Calendar

Sunday	January 7	One Day Sitting, 5:00 am to 5:00 pm.
Tuesday	January 2	Speaker to be announced, 8:00 pm. Donation requested.
Thursday	January 11	Full Moon Bodhisattva ceremony, 6:40 pm.
Sunday	February 4	One Day Sitting, 5:00 am to 5:00 pm.
Tuesday	February 6	8:00 pm, Hospice advocate Ram Dass will speak. Donation requested.
Friday	February 9	Full Moon Bodhisattva ceremony, 6:40 pm.
Sunday	February 18	MAITRI HOSPICE BENEFIT Writing with Visualization Workshop with Diane di Prima at HSZC, 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm, \$40.00. All proceeds will be donated to Maitri Hospice Program. Limited enrollment. \$20.00 non-refundable deposit due one week in advance.
Saturday	February 24	Priest Ordination Ceremony, 2:30 pm.
Sunday	March 4	One Day Sitting, 5:00 am to 5:00 pm.
Sunday	March 4	MAITRI HOSPICE BENEFIT Poetry Reading to Benefit Maitri Hospice featuring Allen Ginsberg, Judy Grahn, Diane di Prima, Nathaniel Macky, and Zenshin Philip Whalen. 8:00 pm, Room 250, McLaren Hall, University of San Francisco. Donation \$8, \$6 students. Volunteers needed, call 861-6779.
Tuesday	March 6	Speaker to be announced, 8:00 pm. Donation requested.
Monday	March 12	Full Moon Bodhisattva ceremony, 6:40 pm.
Sunday	March 18	MAITRI HOSPICE BENEFIT Writing with Visualization Workshop with Diane di Prima at HSZC, 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm, \$40.00. All proceeds will be donated to Maitri Hospice Program. Limited enrollment. \$20.00 non-refundable deposit due one week in advance.

Weekly Schedule

Sunday: Informal period of zazen at 9:20 am, lecture 10:00 am, soji 11:00, tea and discussion, 11:20. Donation requested.

Monday: Zazen orientation for newcomers, 5:30 pm. If you cannot attend at this time please call and make an appointment with Paul Higley.

A class in Buddhist Chant Study, led by Zenshin Philip Whalen, will be offered starting Monday January 8. The tuition, which is a donation to HSZC, will be required in advance. Please call for details.

Wednesday: Shanti Support Group, 7:00 pm.

Thursday: Maitri Hospice Volunteer Support Group meets every other Thursday, beginning with the first Thursday of each month, at 7:30 pm. January 4, 18. February 1, 15. March 1, 15, 29.

Shanti Support Group, 7:00 pm.

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HARTFORD STREET ZEN CENTER

Daily Schedule

Monday through Friday

Zazen	6:00 am
Interval	6:25 am
Zazen	6:30 am
Service & Soji	6:55 am
Zazen	6:00 pm
Service	6:40 pm

Zendo Protocol

Please arrive five minutes early and get well settled before the period begins. Be as quiet as possible and walk very softly, bowing as you enter the sitting area and when crossing in front of the altar.

When you reach your seat bow towards it with hands together in gassho, then turn clockwise and bow facing outward before sitting down. When the bell rings at the end of the period bow with your hands in gassho, fluff your zafu cushion, bow towards your seat and then away from it. If you are not staying for service leave as quietly as possible, bowing as you pass the altar. After the service, stand at your place until the Doan (time keeper) bows, then follow the person furthest from the door out of the zendo.

It is suggested that you wear dark loose fitting clothing—pants or a long skirt, but not shorts—and that you do not wear socks when sitting. Once you are seated and the bell has rung, please make your best effort not to move or make noise.

Dokusan (practice interviews)

Students are encouraged to attend dokusan on a regular basis. Both Zenshin Philip Whalen and Abbot Issan Dorsey are available to discuss your practice and answer students' questions. Please make appointments in advance.